The Commonweal

August 1, 1947

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Black Week in Argentina

Ernesto Luciani

Is England Dying?

J. L. Benvenisti

Displaced Alaskans

James E. Curry

VOLUME XLVI 15c NUMBER 16

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Next Week

CHRISTIAN RECONSTRUCTION IN FRANCE, by M. R. Desobry, prior of the Paris Dominicans and chaplain at the French National School of Mines, tells of a whole series of new approaches to the apostolate. It cites the considerable number of priests working side by side with factory workers in their daily tasks and living in the same sort of hovels as many French workers.

PEACE AND PREJUDICE, by George H. Dunne, whose play on the Short case is to be produced in New York this fall, deals with racial discrimination and explains in philosophical terms just how this failing conflicts with basic Christian teachings. Father Dunne also maintains that "a successful, sane, integral culture cannot be built on professed principles that are consistently contradicted in practice."

LEBANESE INDEPENDENCE, by Habib Joseph Awad, representative of lay and ecclesiastical leaders of Lebanon, is a plea to the American people for "the only remaining country of Christian character" in the Middle East. It has been independent since 1943, but now seems to be squeezed between the rival forces of Britain and Russia. There is pressure for union with Syria; the Arab League and various Arab states strongly oppose Lebanese independence.

THE WRITER AS CITIZEN, by Nancy Lenkeith, is a study of James T. Farrell and his intensely serious new volume of literary criticism, "Literature and Morality." "War and Peace," naturalism and the Marxian theory of literature, the role of the creative writer, etc., etc., all come under her purview.

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The
COMMONWEAL

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Marshall Plan Obstacles

IN SUPPORTING the current program for European reconstruction we have not been over-optimistic. We have recognized the limits of possible accomplishment—with Europe sharply divided, workers ill-nourished and fatigued, factories in ruins and morale pitiably low. Acknowledging how little there is for the Europeans to work with—even with generous American aid and production know-how—has not, however, diluted our conviction that the Marshall Plan has no acceptable alternative; it must be attempted without reserve. The fact that the International Trade Organization meeting in Geneva is now talking in terms of customs unions, with preliminary tariff reductions among all prospective members of such a union, is a sign that there is a will to economic union despite obstacles which seem to rise from day to day.

The clear-cut fashion in which Russia and her satellites eliminated themselves from participation gave rise to hopes that the program would develop without obstruction or sabotage. All sixteen European participants are strongly for it as their only chance. But as the parley proceeds in Paris the snags become increasingly obstinate. Russia is undoubtedly in the background, but the chief difficulty so far is the inability of the United States, Britain and France to reach agreement as to Germany.

The American idea appears to be to revive German industry in the western zones as rapidly as it can be done. We want heavy German exports—not only to pay for the food which must now be imported into a Germany which has lost its agricultural regions to the East, but also to supply other European nations with the coal, steel and other industrial sinews on which they have long been dependent (just before the war the German Ruhr, for instance, supplied 26 percent of the continent's steel and 40 percent of the coal). Our statesmen think that the best way to achieve this—and at the same time to cut down our own occupation expenses—is to turn these facilities over to competent German managers. All this is discussed here in connection with the Marshall Plan on the assumption that German industry must supply a sizable portion of the new European industrial potential if the whole plan is to work.

England is none too keen on the American idea of the best means of achieving industrial rehabilitation in western Germany. She is much more concerned over some future Germany military resurgence than we, naturally. But primarily her difference with us at this point is ideological. What her Labor Government has in mind is the socialization of the basic industries of the Ruhr—although it is difficult to see how this difference is irreconcilable when a temporary *modus* could be reached in the interests of vitally needed immediate production, an arrangement with the proviso that the German people within a small, specified number of years vote on the question of socialization.

France is another matter. Regardless of political affiliation, the French to a man are fearful of a revivified Germany. Possibly this time the demographic disadvantage is not so great, for there are some forty-six, not seventy, million people in the western German zones. Yet Frenchmen have long memories. In the second place, they are among the most vehement of all Europeans in their determination to avoid another war. They do not fancy either the Russian or the American systems and the last thing they want is to serve again as a battleground in a war between these titans. Currently there are five million Frenchmen who vote Communist—which restrains French ardor for rearming western Germany, building up an anti-Russian economic bloc or taking sides against the East.

The Marshall Plan, of course, invites the participants to work out their own schedule of vital

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needs, their own outlines of economic union. Yet a formula has to be found to resolve these and other basic differences. The essential thing is to arrive at a program which is not directly aimed against anyone, but rather enables the war-battered peoples of western, if not eastern, Europe to set up a joint economy which will work, with this country supplying necessary funds and know-how. Germany has to be part of it and this time we are on the scene for keeps. That is one new element which the French might find reassuring. We are hardly eager for a new war, either. And if the United States, France and Britain would focus their attention on their more or less commonly held objectives here, they might find it easier to reach agreement on the means.

The Oil on Mr. Burch's Farm

UNLESS Mr. Guy Irving Burch, who is described by the Associated Press as a population expert and a member of the Population Reference Bureau, has some kind of written agreement with George Bernard Shaw, it would probably be a good idea for Mr. Burch, before handing out any further press releases, to get in touch with Mr. Shaw and find out if it is all right with that sharp-edged old gentleman if he and his organization take over what used to be one of Mr. Shaw's acknowledged trans-Atlantic privileges—the right to pass at least annual judgment on the generally low state of American intelligence. Mr. Burch may have some late information which has convinced him that Mr. Shaw is entirely through with the United States, even as a flabby and slightly foolish target for his jokes, but it is more likely that, like any eager contender, he has concluded that Mr. Shaw's long period of quiet on the subject of American intelligence (he has recently had an ill wish or two for the world in general, but it has been a long time since he has taken public notice of the witless atmosphere which always seemed to strike him whenever he found occasion to comment on life in the United States) leaves that critical title vacant. That seems the only reasonable way to explain the analysis of the American mind which Mr. Burch, aided by Dr. Francis Brown, another population-education expert, has just made public.

After looking over the returns which have been coming in at the offices of the Population Reference Bureau, Mr. Burch has concluded that the intelligence of the American people seems to be declining, a conclusion with which Dr. Brown agrees, although he seems more inclined to regard our current dullness as a seasonal slump and thinks that we have a fairly good chance of pulling out of it. Mr. Burch, however, is not anywhere near as cheerful. Looking out from the front office of the Population Reference Bureau, he finds that one-third of the people passing by his window "are no better intellectually than dull or backward." The next forty percent are what Mr. Burch calls "normal," which apparently means they are just about able to get along. That leaves 27 percent—all of them intellectually superior, Mr. Burch concedes. As a kind of compensation, he points out that things are even worse in England, where, according to the Royal Commission on Population, the number of feeble-minded persons is expected to double within the next fifty years. In summing up, Mr. Burch says that the big trouble is human reproduction; the unenlightened, economically depressed section of the population insists on having too many children. We will have to change this somehow, he says, by birth control or "some other way."

Since Mr. Burch feels so strongly about all this, he and the Population Reference Bureau will probably go right on searching for that other way. They could save themselves a lot of time, though, as well as the price of a new set of statistics, by sending somebody out to pick up a copy of the New York *Times* for Sunday, July 20, 1947—the issue which carries the story of Mr. Burch's report. The summary of his report appears in the first section of that issue, and if Mr. Burch and his assistants limit themselves to an examination of the other news stories in that 24-page section they should find that things are not as bad as they think.

In the first place, the story of Mr. Burch's report is buried on page fifteen, which proves that the editors of the *Times*, who are in constant touch with the people at either end of Mr. Burch's intelligence scale, do not take his conclusions too seriously. On page one of the same section there is a story wired from Vienna by a correspondent named Albion Ross. Altogether, Mr. Ross's story runs for about a column; the two opening paragraphs are of his own composition, but the remainder of the story is a quotation from somebody else's editorial. If Mr. Burch gets about among newspaper men, he knows what that means. Mr. Ross obviously filed his story on Saturday night, either before a party or just after one, and the eventual location of his dispatch (page one) proves—in spite of Mr. Burch's figures—that the American newsman is losing none of his Saturday night shrewdness. Another story on the first page includes a discussion of Anglo-American occupation difficulties in Germany. According to the story, the American-British discussions of occupation policy have not always been peaceful affairs and during the reign of ex-Secretary Byrnes the talks sometimes reached such an impasse that Mr. Byrnes was in the habit of offering to swap occupation zones with the British. The British, on these occasions, reflecting on the ornaments of their zone—among them, the Ruhr—invariably turned down Mr. Byrnes's offer, a clear indication that Mr. Burch and the Royal Commission on Population have

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over-estimated the increasing rate of English feeble-mindedness. On page six (that is, nine pages in advance of the story about Mr. Burch and his bureau) there is a picture of an Alberta farmer who has just struck it rich; oil has been discovered on his farm and he is now taking in royalties at the rate of $255 daily. The farmer's name is John Pristow and he is a recent immigrant from Poland. Mr. Pristow, with his wife and three children, is shown standing in front of his home, a building which does not look at all like the kind of structure one would expect to see if oil had been discovered on land held by a member of the small-family, superior intelligence group. How much oil has been discovered on *your* farm lately, Mr. Burch?

For a Mississippi-Missouri Valley Authority

PRESIDENT TRUMAN has frequently mentioned his desire to get along with members of the Eightieth Congress, but if his recent message to the legislators on the subject of flood control in the Mississippi and Missouri valleys is an example of his idea of cooperation, then it is probably just as well that he never worked too hard at it. After flying over the flooded areas while on a recent trip to Kansas, the President last week sent a message to Congress which recommends that four billion dollars (already authorized by Congress, but retarded through lack of appropriations) be spent during the next ten years in an effort to control floods in the Mississippi Basin.

The President's message was a halfway suggestion and, as such, probably passes for cooperation on a delicate subject between a Democratic President and a reluctant Republican Congress. But it must have been a serious disappointment to residents of the Mississippi Basin. People who live in that area (there are about seven millions of them in the Missouri Valley alone) have seen too many floods and have heard too much about piecemeal appropriations and dams built by the Army Engineers to be enthusiastic about the prospect of a ten-year repetition of the same old flood control pattern.

What the Mississippi Basin people wanted to hear was a call for the immediate creation of a Mississippi-Missouri Valley Authority. The President did say that he favored the creation of such an Authority, but he said he was in favor of it at some time in the future. Most of the Basin people are undoubtedly for some kind of Valley Authority right now.

The strongest argument in favor of a Missouri-Mssissippi Valley Authority is the fact that something like it has already been tried and found to be an excellent, workable idea—the TVA. And the most persuasive argument against President Truman's suggestion is the fact that it, too, has been tried and has proved to be a failure. The Army and the Department of the Interior have been building and supervising dams along the Missouri and Mississippi for many years now, but their handiwork has never spared the residents of the Basin from the ravages of a single major flood. And worse, neither have all those dams contributed to the agricultural development of the area (one of the potentially richest farming sections in the world), nor have they been able to head off the flow of population out of the Basin. Since 1940 at least a million people have moved out of the Mississippi and Missouri Valleys, and under the present circumstances there is no reason to anticipate a reversal of this trend.

The creation, now, of one or more Valley Authorities would head off the flood waters before they reached the ineffectual dams and, even more important, would provide the irrigation and cheap electric power necessary for the exploitation of a region rich in bituminous coal, oil and oil shale, and phosphates, and would also attract rather than repel an enterprising population into the seriously depleted Missouri and Mississippi valleys.

Between now and the next time Congress convenes, the President will have a good chance to reconsider his stand on the immediate necessity for a Mississippi-Missouri Valley Authority. It is to be hoped that his next message to Congress on the subject will be less cooperative and more visionary.

Plans and People

ALL THROUGH ALL wars our attachment, our anxiety, go to variants of brave little Belgiums, Stalingrads, Battles of London and also to the Undergrounds. Every country—on our side—has its statue of liberty which we know and salute, its heroism which we recognize. Our own is always the greatest, naturally, but when we look at it, while the wars are on, it is like a light which lights up all the scenery, and so the other heroisms, the Allied heroisms, are visible to us also and are recognized. And it is that way with suffering too. While the wars are on there are our own men who do not return, and our grief for them illumines—like the flare dropped from the bomber—the desolate countryside of Poland, the blacked-out London streets, the barbed wire enclosures with the French prisoners in Germany, the Warsaw ghetto. There is no basement torture-room in Rome, in Paris, in Berlin, in Prague, into which our grief and pity and indignation do not see. The Jews are killed, but we fight harder because they are killed; all over Europe freedom is a dream held in the secret heart, but, while the wars are on, we are enabled to see it where it is concealed and secret, and

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it is as if it filled all the sky. Heroism, grief, love, pity, tower above the world while the wars are on, but when the wars are over we have had enough emotions.

There is nothing to be done about it; that's the way it is. The emotions lie dormant; there is no way to arouse them. Any attempt to arouse them is irritating.

So it is best, for instance, not to remove the technical terms which we have placed like lids over garbage cans. It is best to leave Europe's homeless and hopeless concealed beneath the term "Displaced Persons," Europe's Jews beneath the name of Palestine. The general term "problem" safely covers, and conceals and chokes, anything that you happen to think of but do not want to think of.

We look now at Europe, and we see the countries which are communist, or anti-communist, or wavering; we see the statesmen, the coal shortage, the wheat shortage; we provide the Marshall Plan; the Russians provide their Plan; the solution for Europe will be economic and political—we Americans, and Russians, have ceased to look at Europe as if people lived and thought in Europe, and there were not just these countries that must be for us or for Russia.

There is nothing to be done about it; whether we like it or not everything that Americans plan to do about Europe is being thought about on the political plane, for political reasons, for practical reasons, and not for emotional reasons. For a time, during the war, it was as if we could see the peoples of Europe, and now it is as if we could not see them any more. For a time, it was as if we were united to them, so that whatever happened to any of them, in any of the countries, affected us directly. But that time is past; we look at the map of Europe and we see a line drawn across it; on both sides of the line we count the countries as if we were counting coins.

For entirely political reasons, however, it is impossible to proceed with any hope of success so long as we allow this depersonalization to persist. We think of Europe as if each country could be measured in terms of hunger or in terms of possible military strength. We wonder whether Russia can calm the hunger and acquire, as a consequence, the military strength of the grateful and contented nations of Europe—or whether we ourselves can do this. We think of the Germany we destroyed as of a vacuum—and that it must be our influence which fills this space, not Russia's. We wish Europe to unite—as part of our system and not of Russia's.

In this speculation the assumption is, of course, that Europe is finished, and can exist only in the Russian system or in ours. This may be the truth. But for entirely political reasons it is important to know that Europeans hope that it is not the truth. Europeans know that the two great powers are Russia and the United States, and they do not wish to be the beachhead for an American war against Russia, or the advanced base for a Russian war against America. They do not want to be the battleground of any war; they do not want to be the Belgium of any future war. They have had their own wars, centuries of their own wars, and they have nearly destroyed themselves; they refuse to expose themselves to any wars they do not start. They have lost interest in wars, because they have lost any illusion that European nations can be important in any future wars; whatever they may think about war, they know that they are out of scale with any future war; they are content to remember the Franco-Prussian, or the Thirty Years War; they know that all their skill—the German, the French, and diverse minor skills—became obsolescent in 1940. After two thousand years as warriors, they know that there is an end to youth. Only the cavalry lieutenants, between steeplechases, preserve their innocence.

This aversion to being in someone else's war is the least important of two factors to be recognized for entirely political reasons when we are planning Europe's future. The second is this. Europeans, after two thousand years, know—because of bitter experience, disillusion and indefectible hope—that humanity has not reached any final wisdom, no final social or political organization, no ultimate crystallizing into perfection, or even an approach to perfection, especially under those specific forms called American democracy or Russian communism. Consequently they are reluctant to choose between the American and the Russian systems; unless compelled they will refuse to adhere to either. If compelled, it will be as it was under Hitler; they will continue to believe that they must create their own future. Europe gave a great deal to the world—in America we all are immigrants—the people of Europe believe that the time for research is not past, that all the discoveries are not made; they intend with great stubbornness to pursue the search for that synthesis between political and economic democracy which has not yet been discovered by anyone. Before, during and after this last war, the best of the young men of all Europe have been engaged with entire devotion in this task. They are not willing to renounce it now, or to hand it over to us, and lie down.

We no longer look at the Jews of Europe, homeless and undesired, or at the displaced persons. Our pity is exhausted; we are busy with plans. But those plans will not work unless we look once again, if only to understand them, at the hope, the will, the active intelligence, embodied in individual Europeans, concealed yet alive, behind the names of their nations.

C. G. PAULDING.

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Canticle for the Blessed Virgin

Die, Boreas,
And drown your ruins in the gaudy sea.
December, clash your cymbals once again
And put them away.
The crops come thronging from the ground.
The land is green with strength.
The harvests sing like confidence
In the ascetic earth.
Let there be no more patience
With your iron music, death:
Stand, continents, and wear the spring your crown!

The ox-eyed land,
The muted lakes,
The cloudy groves that praise you, Lady, with their blooms,
Fuse and destroy their lights
And burn them into gold for you, great Virgin,
Coining your honor in the glorious sun.

The skies speed up to meet you, and the seas
Swim you the silver of their crests.
If you delay to come, we'll see the meteors, by night,
Skimming before your way,
Lighting the time of death's dismay
In lights as lithe as animals.
And God will blaze your pathway with the incandescent stars.

But oh! Queen of all grace and counsel,
Cause of our joy, Oh Clement Virgin, come:
Show us those eyes as chaste as lightning,
Kinder than June and true as Scripture.
Heal with your looks the poisons of the universe,
Claims your Son's regenerate world!

Because your Christ disposed Orion and Andromeda
And ordered the clean spheres,
And interplayed the chiming suns to be your toy,
Charm you with antiphon and psalmody
And canticle, and countersong;

Because your Christ
Fired the fair stars with argent for your raiment,
And charged the sinner's tears
With clean repentant lights—
(As on the day you found me in the dens of libraries
And crushed the jeweled head of heresy)—
He gave you every one of the redeemed to be your dowry
And angels for your crown.

Come from the compass quarter where the thunder sleeps
And let the pity of those eyes
Rout all the armies of our million dangers
Here where we lie in siege:
For you unlock the treasures of the bleeding Wood.
You hold the Mass-keys, and the locks of Calvary,
And all-grace springs in the founts of your demand.

Lady, whose smiles are full of counsel and theology,
Never have you withheld those seas of light
Whose surf confounds the keenest eye.
Grace me to be the soldier of your Scotus,
Arming my actions with the news
Of your Immaculate command.

You, who have saved me from the ones about to break me
On the iron wheels of sin,
And bought me from the torturer
With all the florins of the Parasceve:
If Christ will burn me clean
Oh my red-handed perjuries,
Win me His Blood again, and blazon me His priest.

But if my hands that one time wore the stench of death
Are too unworthy of the Liturgy
That speaks our deathless Pasch in Veils of Bread,
Make me, until my death, His priest in secret
Offering Mass in all-days' sacrifice.

Teach me to take all grace
And spring it into blades of act,
Grow spears and sheaves of charity,
While each new instant (new eternity)
Flowering with clean and individual circumstance,
Speaks me the whisper of His consecrating Spirit.
Then will obedience bring forth new Incarnations
Shining to God with the features of His Christ.

Envoi:
Tower, stars, and oh, you sun in Aries,
Shatter a way for her through the embattled weather,
Until the hills
Tidy their fields, and fill them full of flowers
For those Annunciations:
And hell shall melt his onsets
Faster than January's brawling clouds
Doomed by the music of her chariot.

THOMAS MERTON.

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Black Week

Several incidents showing what haunts the democrats in Argentina

Ernesto Luciani

IN 1919, Argentina experienced a general strike of a revolutionary character which was suppressed by police gunfire. The anarchist elements had taken possesssion of the streets and the prospect would have been dark indeed if the government had not immediately intervened. It did so by giving orders to its forces to bring the revolt to an end, regardless of the means. That suppression is still remembered as the "tragic week" because of the number of people who died and because of the anguish which the populace had to endure.

I write these lines on Sunday, the sixth of July, 1947. The week which began on June 29th and ended yesterday will also go down in history as a tragic one for the Argentine citizenry. From the hour that President Perón took office on June 4, 1946, until today, an unending list of attempts against individual liberties had taken place, but none of them had the tragic proportions of those of this past week.

Last Sunday (June 29), the Socialist Party was holding a meeting in a suburb of Buenos Aires. There were some thousand persons on hand, quietly listening to the talks of the scheduled speakers who were expressing their views, as the Argentine Constitution permits. Suddenly, a terrific explosion was heard, and as an immediate consequence more than twenty people were stretched out on the ground, covered with blood. So far, four of them have died and the condition of several others is still precarious.

It is important to note at this point that the opposition sentiments of *La Vanguardia,* organ of the Socialist Party, have been quite violent of late. With arguments which were impossible to answer effectively, it had denounced the thousand and one devious activities in which the industrialists who form the trust which governs the country were involved; it had asserted that the impression which the President's wife was making in Europe was a disgrace to Argentina. In sum, it had said that at this stage we were heading directly toward chaos, and that the reason was obvious.

President Perón and the adherents of the *Alianza Libertadora Nacionalista* (Nationalist Freedom Alliance)—Perón's shock troops, composed of young men trained as commandos to attack the opposition with every conceivable weapon—have expressed their point of view on many occasions. Perón has said that his task is not to govern but to fight and that the day that his "descamisados" (or shirtless ones, as they call the Perónists) are given a little rope it will be seen that they are capable of lynching. And there are many others who are disposed to eliminate everything which does not seem to be in harmony with the interests of the Nation.

In view of all this it is not at all surprising that *La Vanguardia* of Tuesday, July 1st, openly accused the authorities of having directly inspired this act of violence. The answer was not long in coming: the Government charged the director of that paper with a crime, and on all the networks in the country officially denounced the Socialists and the opposition in general, accusing them of fomenting public violence. As far as the incident itself went, there was a weak repudiation of the Socialist charge; the police spread a rumor to the effect that the man responsible for the outrage had been one of the audience at the meeting, and that a bomb he had with him had gone off in his pocket. Would that the following explanation of the police were correct: a "communist" (because in Argentina the communists are always to blame for everything, even for acts of violence against themselves) who went to the meeting with a bomb in his hand—perhaps held in reserve for a Peronist meeting—stopped to listen to some of the Socialist speakers as he was passing by. And he was so carried away by what he heard that he forgot that he had the bomb with him. When he sought to express his vociferous approval of the sentiments expressed, he was blown to bits, together with twenty members of the audience!

That is how the week began. But unhappily that was not the only sad development. Not at all. The committee of the Chamber of Deputies charged with studying the political significance of the words spoken by a deputy who is a member of the opposition to the Perón régime came to the decision that the offending deputy should be expelled from the Chamber. Perhaps it will seem strange to North American readers that a member of the parliament can be expelled for the sole crime of being in opposition, but in Perón's Argentine these things happen.

In this instance, it all started some ten days

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ago. It was this way. The representative in question, Ernesto Sanmartino, an able member of the Radical Party, made a proposal to the effect that the wives of public officials should have no special prerogatives nor any right to official honors. Would that this proposal had been taken under consideration on its merits—applying to all individuals—as until recently it would have been. But the Perón majority in the Chamber of Deputies took this to be a censure of Señora Eva Duarte de Perón, who had gone to Europe accompanied by the President's military, aeronautical and naval aides-de-camp. Señor Perón thereby was utilizing instruments of the State for his own private ends, and was mixing personal interests with the carrying on of public affairs with a determination which was worthy of a better cause. And that same parliamentary majority deviated here from its responsibilities in order to win the gratitude of its master, General Perón.

Therefore, scarcely had Sanmartino begun to speak in order to expound his project, when he was assailed by a whole series of jibes and insults which prevented him from continuing; meanwhile the president of the Chamber, Dr. Guardo, whose wife accompanied Señora Perón on her European trip and whose servility is positively astounding, had the alarm bell sounded, thereby preventing the opposition from speaking. That helps explain why an isolated phrase of Sanmartino aroused the anger of the majority, who accused him of having insulted the Argentine people. In the midst of a tumult, it was voted that a special committee was to study these words and their political significance. It did no good for Sanmartino himself to say that he had had no intention of offending anyone. The committee was named and soon a meeting was held which came to the decision that Sanmartino must be expelled from the Chamber. But that required a two-thirds vote of the deputies. Perón immediately ordered all deputies of the Government majority who were away from the federal capital to return to the city of Buenos Aires, and in that way Sanmartino was expelled from the parliament. No doubt if they had not succeeded in securing two-thirds of the vote they would have been magnanimous and simply suspended the aforementioned deputy for six meetings. Such are the guarantees which the parliamentary opposition enjoys in the Argentine Republic today.

An attack on freedom of assembly resulting in several deaths and a number of wounded persons, and an attack on the right of elected representatives to express their ideas without interference would seem to be enough misery for one week, but there is still more. Friday, at eight in the morning, while leaving his house, another opposition Deputy, Señor Cirpiano Reyes, was fired upon from a waiting automobile. Bullets riddled the taxi in which he was traveling and killed the driver. Señor Reyes is a well-known corporation executive who supported Perón in principle during the electoral campaign, but who since has indicated that he had been deceived and has stated that Perón is a traitor to the principles which had raised him to the presidency. From then on the meetings of the Laborite Party, of which Reyes is president, encountered all sorts of obstacles on the part of organized gangs of Peronists, which harried them in every way and which on one occasion exchanged shots with the Laborites. Reyes has unquestioned prestige among the working masses, and he constitutes a thorn in the side of the Peronist movement. He is very brave and sincere, and a man who has never remained silent nor refrained from denouncing the arbitrary manner in which he has been treated. So great is the hatred in which he is held in government circles that they dismissed a doctor from a provincial hospital for having treated his mother in an illness which finally proved fatal. Perón and his followers stop at nothing in the way of meanness when it is a question of taking vengeance.

Of course the police immediately tried to fix the blame for this attempted assassination on the Communists. Reyes called the attention of the Chamber of Deputies to the fact that the detectives who were always posted opposite his home to check on whoever enters or leaves, and those who always watch over the grounds of his house, by a rare coincidence were not in evidence that morning.

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And these outrages continue. Next, it is a question not of the fundamental protections which are the right of every human person, but of freedom of the press. There is a nationalist daily, *Tribuna* by name, with notorious fascist tendencies, which has just stopped receiving a subsidy from the president of the Central Bank of Argentina, a Señor Miguel Miranda. This paper, which is published by an organization which is implicitly official, has never had to pay a single bill for printing. Consequently, with free paper and without having to pay for printing, *Tribuna* has enjoyed a privileged position—to say the very least. It is hardly surprising that it sang the praises of the authorities in every column. So close was its Government connection that its director was arrested by the Senate on a charge of having insulted that body by criticizing the financial policy of the Government. He was imprisoned for only four days but this demonstrates on the one hand the servitude of the Argentine journalist and on the other the respect in which freedom of the press is held in the Argentine Parliament.

One fine day, when representatives of the

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Tribuna went to the printers for the copies of their daily newspaper, they were confronted with a demand that they pay their bills. The next day a most violent campaign got under way against Señor Miranda in the *Tribuna,* which asserted everything that the opposition had always said about him. As is well known, Miranda is famous for having expressed his lack of interest in ethics, for his sentiments to the effect that "business is business," for having taken advantage of his position as dictator of Argentine finances to feather his own nest (he boasts of making 20,000 pesos a day) and for his lack of culture. The *Tribuna* remembered all this, published extremely compromising letters of Miranda's and tried to get him expelled from the Government.

Again the answer was not long in coming. Employees of the Department of Labor investigated *Tribuna,* discovered that it owed money to the social security fund, and closed down the paper. The director struggled valiantly. But it was of no avail that he sang the praises of Señora de Perón in every note on the scale, while he continued to attack Miranda. It was of no avail to point out that all the newspapers in the country—or nearly all—owed money to social security. The *Tribuna* had committed the unpardonable sin of attacking the master of Argentine finances and was closed down.

And as a corollary of this complete suppression there has just been presented in the Argentine Chamber of Deputies a Peronist proposal to reduce the number of pages in the daily newspapers to ten. That will really kill the opposition press, throw out on the street thousands of newspaper workers and, in a word, put an end to all liberty of the press. The Government realizes that the principal papers have no doubts as to its intentions, and since it does not know how to suspend them, it has chosen this means. Let the readers of THE COMMONWEAL picture the New York *Times,* or even the *Journal-American,* with only ten pages of print. But that is what they are trying to do in Argentina—to suppress *La Prensa* and *La Nacion,* the two principal daily papers who are opposed to the Perón régime.

The Christian Democrats in Argentina have repudiated on every score these attacks on the democratic freedoms which transpired during this tragic week. Unfortunately they comprise but a tiny minority. This Government, which claims to be Catholic in spite of the fact that its President had his picture taken embracing a Peronist deputy right after the deputy had emerged from a duel (anyone who takes part in a duel is *per se* immediately excommunicated), continues to be supported by a large proportion of the clergy and faithful, who see no farther than the end of their noses; they believe that in spite of all the mistakes which Perón has made he is better than communism, dreaming up in this manner a danger which is non-existent for them, since in Argentina it is not communism which opposes Perón—but democracy.

Is England Dying?

J. L. BENVENISTI

RECENTLY, there appeared in *Look* magazine an article entitled "England is Dying. What is it worth to save her?" It professed to give an account of prevailing British conditions, and the author, a Mr. Nat Finney, went out of his way to explain that these alleged conditions were due to no flaw in the character of British people. Since, however, everything else he wrote implied that these alleged conditions were due to gross mismanagement and lack of foresight, and since the effect of the article was to represent us as a nation of spineless irresponsibles, gallivanting down the road to perdition, the whole publication constitutes a malicious libel, and I propose to answer it.

First of all, there is the wild exaggeration of our actual hardships, and this, when we encounter it, is something we resent very much. We suspect the motive, and indeed there is often a sort of concealed but perceptible gloating in descriptions of this kind that gets under our skin. When it is not that, we feel that people are trying to excite pity on our behalf, and we like that even less. As I have explained several times in these columns, we feel America owes us something, and that we should not have to appear before her starving and in rags in order to get it.

Mr. Finney, however, is determined to describe us as having reached just that condition, and to achieve his purpose makes a number of statements which are not only untrue but laughable. He says, for instance, that "there are few curtains on English windows"—which is bosh. Our curtains are often in a pretty bad state, but we do have curtains. He also says that "if an English daughter were so immodest as to lift her skirt, the curtains would have shown up as underclothes"—a sentence which prompts the delicate question how Mr. Finney professes to have come by this amazing piece of information.

Mr. Finney describes our rations (at least his caption writer does so on his behalf) and our rations are certainly on the light side in the matter of meat and fats, but the description is wrong and he omits to say that rations are only meant to provide about half our diet. He says nothing about the provision of additional food on the "points" system, or of foods such as fish, which are still off the ration. He also ignores the fact that a very large proportion of the population eat at least one meal a day in restaurants,

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or that these meals are still relatively cheap and adequate.

On other matters Mr. Finney is equally at sea. He speaks about inflation, which is admittedly at work in Britain, as in every other country, but says nothing about the successful maintenance of price control over a wide range of goods. Yet all these facts must have been known to Mr. Finney, for I assume that Mr. Finney has actually been in London, and that the whole article was not just botched together from mendacious hearsay in the editorial offices of *Look*.

So much for Mr. Finney's accuracy on the mere hard physical facts of life in Britain. But Mr. Finney, the moralist, follows close on the heels of Mr. Finney, the observer. He tells us that as a result of the condition we are in, "England has gone gambling crazy," and holds up his hands in pious New England horror at the fact that 17 million people bet (usually a matter of a few cents) on the "football pools" every week. And then, to put our damnation wholly beyond cavil, he tells his readers that "nearly 400,000 people make their living printing, mailing and checking" these bets, and that "this manpower waste goes on in the very cities that are short of enough workers to make up for the inefficiency of out-of-date machines."

Now, as it happens, the real facts about this latter matter are available. The number of people employed by the pools was declared on the 17th April (i.e., presumably before Mr. Finney's article was written) in a reply by the Minister of Labor in the House of Commons. There are in all not 400,000 but 25,000 people employed, of whom 30 per cent are married women, 25 per cent women under 18 years of age, and 8 per cent men, and of this 8 per cent one-fifth are disabled. Strange that Mr. Finney never found this out, though he could have done so quite easily and by the same means as the writer of this article, namely by lifting a telephone receiver and speaking to the Ministry of Labor.

On the key matter of coal, Mr. Finney uses the same typical technique. He first plays old Harry with the facts, and then subjects them to a completely cockeyed analysis. He tells us that our productivity in coal, which is admittedly the basis of our industry, fell away "because England refused to mine coal with modern machines." We "refused" to do this apparently (at least, this is what we are left to infer) from sheer pigheadedness and preoccupation with Royal Garden Parties.

It would be interesting to know how Mr. Finney, as a 100 percent American go-getter, would react to the real reason for our failure to install modern machinery, a failure which we are remedying as fast as we can. It was because the British mines presented just those conditions where the capitalistic process breaks down. The margin of profit and the degree of security offered were insufficient to have attracted the necessary capital on a commercial basis in any country in the world. In such circumstances the only possible means of providing the necessary capital is by borrowing it on the taxpayer's credit, i.e., by socialization, and the one criticism that can justly be leveled at Britain in this matter is that she socialized rather too late. I am anxious to learn whether Mr. Finney imputes that to her as a defect.

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All this, however, is really by the way, because the essential question which Mr. Finney ought to have asked himself is not why we are not mining as much coal as we might be mining if we had installed up-to-date machinery some years ago, but why there has been a disastrous drop in output since 1939. For it is that drop in output that has really got us into difficulties. But the answer to that question would have been rather inconvenient, for the answer is that, though prewar falls in recruitment do have a bearing on the matter, output has dropped because under the strain of the war our machinery is worn out (we really do have some machinery in our mines, Mr. Finney, even if it is somewhat antiquated) and because the remaining cream of our manhood in the mines was drafted into the fighting services, and, thanks to the enormous military burden that we are bearing, is only slowly returning. The result is that the residual labor force is beginning to crack under the strain.

But I suppose Mr. Finney didn't want things just that way. He wanted to write the whole thing down to demoralization and general decay, so he not only evaded the main point but underscored the point he did want to make with a few details which may have been accurate once but are no longer so today. He tells us that "without modern machinery the miner produced little, so wages were low and competition man-killing." Then in a caption to one of the illustrations we are told that "the boys in the mining villages don't go into the pits any more because their fathers bitterly hate the miner's life."

Unfortunately for Mr. Finney, the truth is quite different. In the first five months of this year, out of a total intake of 47,500 recruits to the mines, 9,143 were juveniles, and of this figure 98 per cent were local lads, that is to say, either miners' sons or lads coming from mining areas. As to the boys' fathers bitterly hating the miner's life, it is odd that of the 47,500 recruits to the industry, 16,434 are ex-miners who, despite the labor shortage in other industries, have returned to the mines.

While we are on this subject of the British

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mines, and Mr. Finney's incredible blunders concerning them, I cannot resist the temptation to deal with another of *Look's* inspired illustrations. It is the one depicting some rows of empty coal cars concerning which we are told that "thousands of English coal cars wait to be filled near the mines in Wales while English industry limps along on short rations." This means, presumably—if it means anything (because naturally there will be a certain number of coal cars waiting their turn before any mine)—that there is a bottleneck here, and that there are more coal cars available than can be filled by the existing rate of production.

Again, unfortunately for Mr. Finney and *Look,* this is the precise opposite of the truth. There really is a loading bottleneck in British mining—but it is due to the fact that there is an actual shortage of coal cars, and that more coal sometimes tends to be mined than can immediately be shifted.

But one can really hardly expect Mr. Finney to bother about a little thing like that, for the whole article is full of such ineptitudes. Indeed, there is hardly a fact that is right, or a figure that is accurate, or a statement that has some slender foundation in reality which is not distorted out of all semblance to the truth.

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Yet so far Mr. Finney has really only been leading up to his final dagger-thrust. It is that we have not made proper use of the loan. We have not bought machinery with it as we were expected to do, but have apparently spent it on any old thing that took our fancy. So if there are to be any more dollars for Britain, America must "put the screws on." As usual, Mr. Finney happily ignores the facts, which are that our slender imports of American machinery are due to the difficulties in getting delivery from American manufacturers, and to no other cause. He also ignores the fact that it would be almost impossible, as the *Economist* showed in a recent article, to cut down on any American imports which we are now making without inflicting grave physical hardship on our people, the only possible exception to this being tobacco and films, which represent a minute fraction of our total imports and are now being substantially cut down. I can only hope that if Mr. Finney's advice is taken, and some kind of control imposed on any future dollar advance, it will be done by people with more insight and a greater degree of factual precision than Mr. Finney.

I have left to the last Mr. Finney's treatment of the British child, for it is here that Mr. Finney really surpasses himself. I quote the opening words of his article: "The mark of slow death is on this nation. It is on the thin, frost-reddened legs of a little girl, playing amidst the snaggly rubble in London's East End, where bomb wreckage still remains unrepaired since the Blitz." By way of parenthesis, I would rather like to know where Mr. Finney discovered any rubble in London. I don't wish to dogmatize, but I have not seen any for well over a year.

However, let us leave the rubble and return to the little girl. I am not in a position to deny that her legs were thin, because she may have been a thin little girl. And her legs may also have been frost-reddened, because it was a frosty day. But then an artist like Mr. Finney uses his materials as he finds them, and if he found a little girl with thin legs which were a bit frost-reddened, he could not be expected to resist the temptation to bung her into the opening paragraph and make her a symbol of "slow death"—even if she was positively bursting with vitamins, which, like the overwhelming majority of British children, she almost certainly was.

It is much the same with that final illustration which shows two children looking wistful in dreary and bomb-scarred surroundings, and bears the caption: "This is the only England that Jack and Meg have ever seen," the implication being not only that the whole of England is shabby and bomb-scarred like the bit shown in the photograph (which it most certainly is not) but that the prospect for an English child is much more bleak than it was in the happy times gone by.

Yet if Jack and Meg had been transported back ten years, it is at least doubtful whether they would have found their condition so much more desirable than it is today. For one thing, Jack and Meg would each in all probability have been about an inch shorter. They would have been far less alert, and probably have been eating not better food but food that was a great deal worse. For the great revolution by which the lot of the underprivileged, and particularly of the children of the underprivileged, has been changed out of all recognition, had not then taken place.

Ten years ago conditions still obtained in England much as they were described in Sir John Boyd Orr's "Food, Health and Income," and as much as 10 percent of the population were definitely on starvation rations, while only half the people were getting an adequate diet at all. Jack and Meg might not have been in the tragic ten percent, but I should say by the general character of their neighborhood that they would certainly have been in the underprivileged 50 percent, and I think it unlikely that they would have been enjoying the diet which they now receive.

Figures of stillbirths and infant mortality are a pretty good index of the general well-being of the population, and particularly of its children, and in Britain these figures tell their own tale. Stillbirths in Britain have fallen from a pre-war

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38.1 per thousand to 27 per thousand, while infant mortality has fallen from 52.8 to 43. Perhaps, however, the most eloquent evidence of all is furnished by the statistics of liquid milk consumption, which has gone up from a pre-war monthly average of 72 million gallons to 112 million gallons, and since rationing has curtailed the supply for the well-to-do, the underprivileged have benefited in far greater proportion than that of the crude increase in total milk consumption. This fact is amply borne out by the supply of liquid milk in schools, which has risen from a pre-war 2 million gallons to 5 million gallons per month.

All these things, which are the fruit not of the Labor Government's efforts alone, but of the combined efforts of both Parties, who follow in this matter a non-controversial policy, Mr. Finney has completely missed. Above all, he has missed their spiritual core, which is the quiet determination of the whole nation that the accident of birth should deprive no child of its chance to make, both physically and mentally, the best of itself. He has seen England (or, at least, I suppose he has) and has felt nothing of that ardent English belief, revived in the war and growing stronger with every year that passes, in the dignity and equality of men, and above all, in the sacred rights of the child—and perhaps of all Mr. Finney's journalistic crimes that is the most unforgivable.

Displaced Alaskans

JAMES E. CURRY

WHAT THE United States does in its oldest trusteeship—that over our Indian tribes—is a matter of concern to more than the 6,000 Alaskan natives who are scheduled to become displaced persons if legislation now pending in Congress is passed. In a day when the United States should carry aloft the banner of international decency and of respect for the rights of little peoples, it is not pleasant to find Government officials sponsoring a bill (S.J. Res. 118, H.J. Res. 205) to deprive 6,000 or so Indians of Southeastern Alaska of their lands and resources. The old, old excuse is offered that Indian ownership of resources is blocking the road of progress, meaning, in this case, the clean-cutting of the forested mountain slopes that rise out of the Pacific between Prince Rupert, B. C., and Juneau. The advocates of the scheme would have us believe that this great lumber operation cannot be carried out unless all Indian timber rights are wiped out in this 16,000,000-acre area. Indian property rights, they say, are confusing.

Human rights are always confusing on a financial balance sheet. Why think about 6,000 hu-

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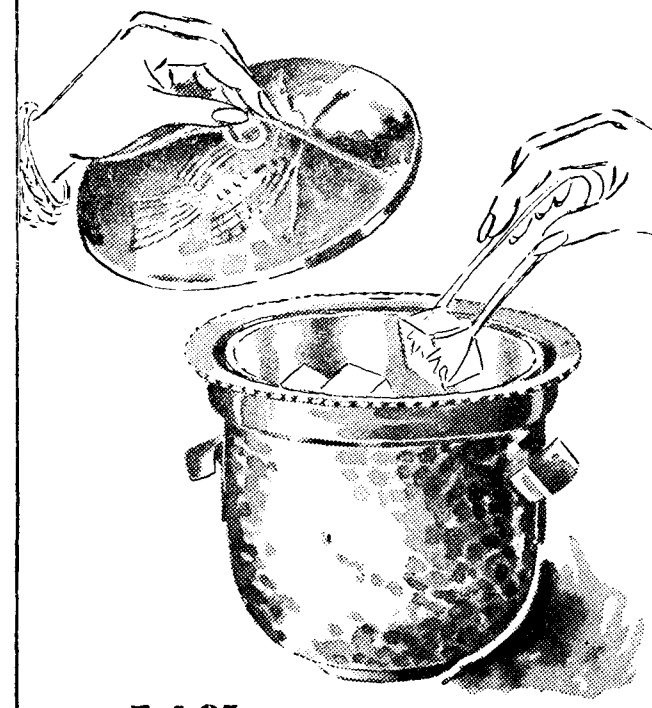

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man souls when Congress, by passing a law wiping out their property rights, can interest capital in a $25,000,000 investment in Alaskan timber? But if experience is any guide the wrecked lives that this displacement of Alaska's first citizens entails will, in the long run, cost the United States Treasury far more than the income it may or may not get from an Alaskan lumber industry.

The excuse that Alaska's Indians stand in the way of progress has no real basis in fact. The natives of Southeastern Alaska were the greatest traders and woodsmen of North America before the first white man came to their shores across the misty seas. Their giant totem poles, great community houses, and sailboats that ploughed the treacherous waters from Portland to the Aleutians, were characteristic of the greatest pre-Columbian civilization north of Mexico. These skills have not been lost, and to this day the Indians are almost the only inhabitants of the region who do not import their boats or their lumber from Seattle.

When the Army set up a great air base in Southeastern Alaska a few years ago, an Indian cooperative sawmill cutting Indian timber furnished the only available local lumber. And in their peacetime occupations, these Indians rely on their timber for the raw material of their homes, schools, churches, and fishing vessels. Indian lumberjacks, millworkers, boat-builders, construction workers, and carpenters safeguarded in the ownership of their own timber resources, could play a large rôle in the development of Alaska that is so pressing a need of our northern outpost.

Equally misleading is the facile argument that recognizing native property rights would make a lumber industry impossible. When the Tongass National Forest was created by Theodore Roosevelt in 1907, the Indians were assured that their prior land rights would not be disturbed. These land rights, amounting to something less than one-sixteenth of the forest area, have been ascertained and marked off by the Department of the Interior within recent years. The anthropological studies of Father Cooper of Catholic University on the land tenures of our farthest north tribes were utilized to give definiteness to the promise made by Congress in 1884 that these Indians "shall not be disturbed in the possession of any land actually in their use or occupation, or now claimed by them." Reassured that this Congressional promise would be faithfully observed, the Alaska natives began to make their plans for developing small wood industries on the 160 acres or so per capita that the Federal Government had marked off as their own. Somehow this did not fit in with bureaucratic convenience. Things would be so much simpler for the Forest Service if it could just ignore Indian property lines. And so, a year or more ago, it began to issue timber permits on adjudicated Indian lands, without consulting the Indian land-owners or even sharing the rentals with them. Now it asks Congress to ratify these unauthorized timber sales and any future timber sales or land sales it may consummate on these Indian lands. And the great engineer who heads the Interior Department and bears the responsibility for discharging the Federal Government's trusteeship over its Indian wards joins in that request.

All this would be bad enough, from the standpoint of human and moral values, if the Indians concerned were being paid for the expropriated lands and timber. Conceivably they might put the proceeds into other forms of capital, such as fish canneries, to supplant the income they were just beginning to get from wood industries.. But all they are offered is a right to sue the Federal Government for the value of what is taken from them. And all our history indicates that while buying land from Indians can be a very rapid process when cash is paid on the barrel head, there is no such expedition when Indian lands are taken first and a right to sue the Government later on is allowed.

When the timber of the Chippewa Indians of Minnesota was taken on such a basis in 1908, it took 31 years before the courts adjudicated the Chippewa claim to compensation, and then their decision was that the timber, which sold for millions of dollars, was unmerchantable in 1908. And so the Indians, having waited 31 years for compensation, went out of court without a cent. The California Indians, who likewise had their lands taken before payment, waited 91 years before the courts decided that they were entitled to $5,000,000 compensation for giving up most of the land of California. The great grandchildren of those who were thus torn from fertile valleys that the Spanish missions had helped them to cultivate are still waiting for Government officials to decide how and when the $5,000,000 which has been duly appropriated to a special account in the United States Treasury, will be actually paid to the California Indians. The Department of Justice contends that since the United States can take Indian property "by the sword," there is no obligation to compensate Indians who are expropriated.

Not such was the teaching of Francisco Vitoria, the real founder of international law, who in 1532 proclaimed the duty of Christian sovereigns to deal justly with Indians and to make due compensation for all cessions of Indian property, recognizing that "the aborigines in question were true owners." It was the Bull of Pope Paul III (*Sublimis Deus*) that in 1537 first enunciated, on behalf of the Indians of the New World, the principle that has since become the foundation

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of all our constitutional guarantees and of all minority rights everywhere: "the said Indians are by no means to be deprived of their liberty or the possession of their property. . . ." These words were echoed in our Fifth Amendment and in the first act of Congress on Indian affairs, the famous Northwest Ordinance of 1787, which declared: "The utmost good faith shall always be observed towards the Indians; their lands and property shall never be taken from them without their consent." Unfortunately, pledges of national honor do not show up in the profit and loss accounts of Alaskan timber operations that federal officials parade before Congressional committees.

Indians who have returned from the wars to find a scheme of racial expropriation depriving them of their livelihoods and their hopes for the future are profoundly disturbed. They observe grimly that in 1844 His Imperial Majesty, the Autocrat of All the Russias, ordered the officials of the Russian-American Company to "obtain the consent of the natives" when they wished to acquire native lands or resources. Even the autocracy of the Czars, the most absolute of its generation, was not as autocratic as the autocracy of modern materialism which excludes human values from bureaucratic balance sheets.

The Forest Service schemes will not be passed by Congress if an aroused public conscience insists that the United States shall not set industrial balance sheets above the code of fair dealings that was the beginning, and is still the keystone, of a morality that transcends national boundaries.

Communications

POETRY AND CONTEMPLATION

Chicago, Ill.

TO the Editors: All who are concerned for the improvement of the esthetic quality of Catholic letters should be grateful for Thomas Merton's courageous, air-clearing statement. In recent years there has been an abundance of worrying *via* Catholic periodicals about the low state of Catholic writing—specifically *American* Catholic writing, and the composite conclusion of these deliberations seems to be that we will have a body of Catholic writing worthy of the Church when our coddled cradle-Catholics learn to imitate our convert brethren "in their operation": we must be converts, too—not from Judaism, Anglicanism, or atheism, but converts from our secular selves and the alien world of our soul's exile. We too must re-discover Truth, must contemplate it, live it. We will not have a Catholic culture till we do.

This is indisputable, but what is the fate of art in the perspective of Grace? For every articulate convert, how many more have been silenced by conversion? Must art decrease as Grace increases? That is a question that remained ignored until Father Merton faced it: ". . . when we are entering the realm of true contemplation . . . poetry may turn around and bar our way." The esthetic instinct may indeed become a "fatal handicap."

In this connection let me mention a little book of a few years back, "Shadows over English Literature," by Constance Julian, a convert, one of the nicest and most useless exercises ever published. It purported, according to Father Husslein's prologue, "to show the consequences implied in the lives of English men of letters . . . by the loss of the ancient Faith."

Now, my quarrel was not with the conjectural nature of the inquiry—though Chesterton had long before settled the matter by saying that "the question cannot be strictly or scientifically answered; because nobody knows what difference would be made to anybody by any change in the circumstances of his life"; and anyway, as Newman observed, "English literature will always *have been* Protestant."

What I couldn't quite believe is that, with their Catholice inheritance intact, these people would automatically have been better artists. The Church is not primarily interested in developing artists, only in developing saints; and for some (I need mention only Racine) becoming a saint may well be a career in itself. The two vocations are not mutually exclusive, but it may happen that, given the transparent and radical honesty of the sensitive artist, with the restoration of his faith, his tensions eased, polarities reconciled, passions redirected, all in the Will of God, he will find he has no more to say to men, but only private psalms of praise for God.

How, for instance, can one be so sure that, had Keats "followed the star of love and beauty" to "its home in the Church," we should have had from his pen "inspired music more beautiful than that of the sonnet 'On First Looking into Chapman's Homer,' which is accounted one of the most perfect in the English language?" His voice might just as understandably have been stilled, and while the *corpus* of English literature would lose by it, how much Heaven would gain! Or, unhappy thought, he might even have taken to writing tracts! Or, just how differently or better would a Catholic Keats have handled Chapman's Homer? If Keats's sonnet speaks the Truth, it is already Catholic. From our impregnable stronghold of Truth, we can afford to cherish the struggle for Truth without. We have not always been so careful of the Truth ourselves.

Or Shakespeare, who "dyed a Papist." In this same book Father Husslein, and Blanche Mary Kelly, whom he quotes, agree that he would have been "incomparably greater" had the "Renaissance and the Reformation never occurred." How much greater do we want Shakespeare?

E. I. Watkin has demonstrated dialectically that classical tragedy, which brings us to "the threshold of religion," is transformed by religion into high comedy—a divine comedy; that religion destroys drama by fulfiling it; that if the intrinsically Catholic artist is a successful tragedian it is only because for the moment at least he is writing with his tongue in his cheek, or yielding to a "more or less conscious agnosticism" in his patrons, since he cannot seriously regard as serious the issues of his tragic conflict, based as they are on nature unperfected

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by Grace. From which it would appear that Shakespeare was a great artist *in spite of* the fact that he "dyed a Papist."

Father I. J. Semper of Loras College holds that while Shakespeare may not always have lived as a Catholic, he experienced his conversion, his intuition of ultimates, at the time of "The Tempest"—that is, at the height of his career. He states his case as follows:

> (*The Tempest*) is not only a *Vale* to the "rough magic" of art; it is also an *Ave* to the infinitely finer magic of repentance and prayer. Prospero abjures his "rough magic," because art, like all finite things, "the great globe itself, yea, all which it inherit," is as transitory as a dream. Prospero's eloquent renunciation, ringing with medieval contempt for the present life, goes far beyond the requirement of the dramatic purpose, and hence we may believe that it is Shakespeare himself speaking *sub specie aeternitatis*. His renunciation of art reminds us of a similar renunciation made by Saint Thomas Aquinas, who, shortly before his death, referred to his unfinished *Summa* as rubbish—*mihi videtur ut palea!* . . . And it is as a penitent in need of pardon that Prospero is presented to us in the concluding scenes of the play. When he strips himself of "rough magic" he prepares for a retirement where "every third thought shall be of my grave . . ." (*Catholic World*, February, 1943).

In Margaret Webster's projection of the play a few seasons ago, Prospero's valedictory was shifted to the very end of the play, so that instead of covering merely the theme of enchantment, it seems to close the curtain over a whole lifetime of vain pursuit. "Stage stuff indeed," one Catholic critic called this device; but he missed the point. Mercifully for English literature, Shakespeare was vouchsafed a long period of intensive creative activity on a sub-religious plane, contingent only upon the perennial moral order of human nature. Mercifully for Shakespeare, he was vouchsafed escape from inevitable despair "reliev'd" as he was "by prayer,"

> Which pieces so that it assails
> Mercy itself and frees all faults.

Between art and religion then is the chaos. Shakespeare risked the leap across, but he was lucky, and he was a genius: it is not a risk that is recommended. When we prescind from Providence for purposes of art, we take our salvation into our own hands, and our soul is in peril. *Fatal handicap* . . . But if we have to make this choice, what happens to the world's work that it is ours to do? What of Mauriac's novelist who "cannot not write," yet is "tempted to silence"; or, as Thomas Merton puts it, "What if one is morally certain that God wills him to continue writing anyway?" That is a torturing thought, but only so until we acknowledge it as a mystery. It is really very simple. It is especially simple "if one's religious superiors make it a matter of formal obedience to pursue one's art." In that case, it is obeying the Will of God. For the rest, we must merely put first things first, and the first thing is the Kingdom of Heaven.

If seeking the Kingdom of Heaven keeps us too busy to do that Great Catholic Novel, *quid inde?* Art is not the Light, but only gives testimony of the Light. The libraries and theaters and abbeys of Europe may be rubble today, but compared to the dissolution of all books, all music, all buildings everywhere, at the end of time, they are in good condition. On the other hand, if the Will of God has made it clear that our vocation is a creative one, we will not lose our souls in carrying out that Will: our art is then our apostolate, and thus an art that is transfigured, in those who create it and those who contemplate it, "by the glory of the immanent Word." "The Blood of the redemption, which can turn a man into a friend of God," as Maritain so beautifully stated it, "can also, if It touches them, exorcise Art and the Novel."

MARY ELLEN EVANS,
Assistant Editor, Books on Trial.

FOOD PARCELS

Basel, Switzerland.

TO the Editors: Mr. V. K. Baker seems troubled by the fact that you included German addresses among those of various people to whom you suggest that food parcels be sent and he says that the question is not one of loving one's enemies, but of abandoning one's friends.

I agree with Mr. Baker, but I should like to suggest that he make a distinction between friends and enemies in *all* camps. Otherwise he might be tempted to send food parcels to, say, Vichyites in France and Rexists in Belgium and he might exclude German martyrs of the concentration camps and other fellow-Catholics in Germany who fought Hitler while many blind people in other countries were doing business with him. And, of course, there are the children, too, against whom, I am sure, Mr. Baker will not want to apply retribution.

Of course, all this can be summed up in the statement that justice always must be coupled with mercy if it is to be Christian in its motivation.

MAX JORDAN.

THE FRENCH RECORD

Paris, France

TO the Editors: Since the publication of my article defending the record of France's administration in Indo-China I discover that the source of George F. Sheldon's indictment, to which I replied, seems to have been a pamphlet entitled "Témoignages," issued by Hochi Minh and his political party, Viet Minh—not to be confused with Viet Nam, the name of the country—in Hanoi in 1945. It consists in a series of carefully selected phrases from French literary men or from French political pamphlets and in it certain regrettable facts—but for the most part certain highly distorted interpretations of facts—together with downright lies, have built up an impressively anti-French picture.

I regret to notice that recently in the book review section of *Pacific Affairs* Mr. Sheldon persists in recommending the said pamphlet as "the most exhaustive and certainly the most interesting of the documents published under the auspices of the Republic of Viet Nam," and demonstrating "the failure of the French to provide a just and efficient administration in Indo-China."

I am glad that I have been justified in trusting to your sense of fair play.

H. BRENIER,
Correspondent de l'Institut de France.

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The Stage & Screen

Rip Van Winkle

IT IS SAD to have to admit that the big sleep indulged in by the hero of this special American classic was undoubtedly shared by all present on its opening night. It is true I could not detect salient snores among the house, but rather, all round, mumbles and sighs and the plush-hush of retreating feet. The arrival of the New York City Theatre Company at the City Center marks an honest and important effort and one that has been hoped for in this column for some time. Comprising a stock company, made up of a number of the most talented and serious young professionals on the street, the organization has planned a summer season at the Center, at most popular prices, and is hoping, I believe, to swing a winter one as well. Including such names as Philip Bourneuf, Herbert Berghof, Montgomery Clift, and Mildred Natwick, it is obvious that the level of intelligence here is high, and if these people have managed to deliver what I can only call a long, long lemon, the reasons for it ought somehow to be examined.

It does seem to me that the choice of the Washington Irving legend, supported as it is by the Joe Jefferson legend, plus a kind of mild, allover, intellectual curiosity, should have been a workable one. The enormous capacity of the Center demands a piece of a certain size; at the same time, the architectural difficulties of the stage preclude too elaborate a physical set-up. However, it is with the script itself that the company's difficulties reared. Mr. Berghof's adaptation *and* direction were peculiarly unenlightened, and it is honestly hard to understand the appointment of a cultivated European intelligence to steer such an especial American paradox. I mention this only because Irving's work does seem to me to be paradoxical. If there is a kind of charming rural primitivism displayed in such sketches as the one upon which the play is based, it is still a *genteel* primitivism, a quality which, however intriguing and historically interesting to the reader, is fairly impossible of transference to the stage. There are, of course, two methods for reviving anything —one will be the whole revival, duplicating the exact production conditions of the time of the play's inception; and the second, a revivifying process which re-works the scheme in accordance with modern audience demands. I cannot decide which of these means Mr. Berghof meant to employ. He has, I should judge, cut absolutely nothing from whatever script he used: we have a dreary expanse of seen action and long expositions explaining it. On the other hand, with the aid of the remarkable Carl Kent as designer, he has dressed everything with large movie projections, far too pretentious and prolonged for the material. His most successful bit will probably be the famed Hendrik Hudson bowling episode, but even here, there is such a tangle of effects, one cannot anyway decide whether Wagner or Disney has been the director's spring. Perhaps some reading in Melville's shorter pieces would have led Mr. Berghof and Mr. Kent not into borrowed grotesquerie. The actual, current, *real* airs of the Catskills have not changed at all from their first whimsical, and later sombre and majestic description in literature.

The second whole error committed by the organization has to do with acting. Let me say at once that this appears on the surface to be only (modestly) an acting company, and as such, there is, I fear, little American hope for it. The present is a case in point. The dimensions of this leading rôle are gigantic—nineteenth century bold: a period long before the player ever dreamed of leaning upon machine artifice or the secondary ambitions of a director. What is now called HAM is the first ingredient for such a *rôle*. Moreover, this same quality of HAM is the only ponderable which will fit this City's Theatre; reach its galleries; hold it. I do not mean to appear anti-climactic when I say that this same quality was directed and designed out of the present show, that its working in the part of "Rip" was entrusted to the merely useful abilities of Philip Bourneuf. That is not important. What is important is that HAM is prety badly needed in our niminy day. And I think its seizure is a most bright challenge to a group of young people who are apparently wedded to no method or directorial or promotional scheme. A few weeks ago in a statement about the Experimental Theatre, I hazarded that it was small lyric stuff, plus every psychological examination, which should concern the writers and wrighters at the moment. Balancing this, I would say that for a New York City Stock (Acting) Company, operating in the City's only public theater, a grand splash of nineteenth century romanticism is in order: Scribe, Scott, Sardou, Stevenson, Henley. And what of Wilkie Collins? Has "The Woman In White" never been fiddled? To my certain knowledge, there is a script of "Pickwick" which would suit not only this house, but also the ingenuities of the company's present designer. There is no question that these rafters have got to ring. The Center's concert and operatic offerings have proved that its minimum ad-

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mission draws thoughtful as well as casual money, and certainly supports high talents. The *actors* should also come hither. KAPPO PHELAN.

Heels Without Soles

MY MAIN objection to *"Crossfire,"* a new melodrama with an interesting plot and a strong anti-anti-Semitic message, is that the villain is such a heel that he would be despicable in any language. By the time he commits a second murder, he becomes a killer on the loose in a sensational movie; and then it is hard to consider the first killing (committed only because the victim was a Jew) with the sociological import that the film intends. This is a difficult picture to review anyway, because in talking about it, the reviewer is likely to detract from the plot's impact. Director Edward Dmytryk builds up terrific tension through his portrayal of a post-war atmosphere in which there is a lot of fight and hatred with no place to go. When the drunken corporal (George Cooper) is suspected of murdering the man (Sam Levene) who picked him up at the bar, we feel as certain as his sergeant (Robert Mitchum) and the police detective (Robert Young) that he is not guilty. But it is not until we get his story of this eventful evening (through a flashback which also has its grim aspects) that we realize what happened. Although the script written by John Paxton from Richard Brooks's novel, stops to preach occasionally, and although the villain is such a criminal type, "Crossfire" is definitely a picture to be seen. Assets like Dmytryk's thoughtful direction and the good cast in which Robert Ryan, Gloria Grahame and Paul Kelly excel, outweigh its faults. And its point that murder grows out of minor hatreds (for which we may all be to blame) is something to be considered seriously.

Vic Norman, the leading character in *"The Hucksters,"* is a heel of a different kind. He doesn't go in for murder, but he plays the advertising game, which, according to this movie, has ethics of a very low standard. In one episode, Vic stoops to blackmail to get what he wants. Although the movie version is in many respects an improvement over Frederic Wakeman's novel, its story is still far from satisfactory, and its romantic situations seem even sillier than before. Not even Clark Gable turning on all his charm in scene after scene or lovely Deborah Kerr, whose very presence is a symbol of charm, can hold our interest in this weakly motivated love duel. What does win and hold our attention in "The Hucksters" is the burlesque on people involved in the advertising racket. No doubt the characters are overwritten, but they are made so revolting through the good acting of Sydney Greenstreet and Adolphe Menjou that we have to recommend the picture to people with strong stomachs. Jack Conway's direction is on the whole pretty static, but these characterizations are lively enough for anyone.

In *"They Won't Believe Me,"* Robert Young portrays the sort of heel who is very much in vogue on the screen now—the unmitigated cad. His lawyer (most of the story is told in flashbacks from a courtroom scene) admits that he has been a bad husband and a bad citizen, but adds that he is on trial not for these faults but for murder. During the course of the story, which is well packed with ironical twists, it becomes obvious that three women found this bad boy irresistible: his wife (Rita Johnson) who held him on a chain made of dollar signs; a writer (Jane Greer) who seems too smart for the kind of tomfoolery she lets herself in for; and a gold-digger (Susan Hayward) who has turned down wealthier game and wants him with or without his wife's money. Producer Joan Harrison and Director Irving Pichel use a good cast and some effective cinema to keep us interested in these unpleasant people; and most of the film provides entertainment that's livelier than backfence gossip. The ending however, is just too O. Henry even for a heel.

PHILIP T. HARTUNG.

Books of the Week

The Game Cock and Other Stories. Michael McLaverty. Devin-Adair. $2.75.

WITH that subtle (and now almost completely vanished) art that conceals art, Mr. Michael McLaverty, a youngish Irishman writing from Belfast, adds twelve short stories to the richness of the sensitive, camera-eye recordings in his novels. His Irish dozen aims at modest range, yet within it he is the peer of O'Connor and O'Faolain. This particular nest of simple folk embraces country people, nuns, and children. Eight of the stories are either about children or are reports of the adult world through the mind and experience of a child. They are not, however, indictment, but discovery. In these stories the adult cosmos exists to be apprehended, not overthrown.

Mr. McLaverty is good with simple people, with men and women of epic patience and endurance. His "bad" people are scarcely more complex than the virtuous ones; they either finally face up to the right decisions or they are allowed to limp away quietly, encumbered by their goodness. But he is even better with nature. Old Paddy MacNeil is plowing in his field: "Overhead and behind swarmed the gulls, screeching and darting for worms, their flitting shadows falling coolly on Paddy's neck and on the back of the mare." What happens when a mare sniffs the rain-wet grass, the sound of a moss-cheeper when it sways on a reed, the look of "black shiny horses with their mouths all suds"—these wonders are reported bravely. The curious thing is, here is not still another instance of the pathetic fallacy. Here nature and man exist side by side, working out independent destinies. And the complement and commentary of each for the other remain for the reader to draw from the author's delicate premise.

Nothing much happens, of course. A small boy discovers a wild duck's nest, picks up the smooth green egg; the problem is, will the wild duck forsake the nest? In "The Poteen Maker," which has appeared in THE COMMONWEAL, one meets Master Craig, surely the most whimsically enterprising of chemistry masters. "Aunt Suzanne" is a bright companion piece, for it is the tale of another colorful tosspot, one who considers Saint Patrick "a decent fella, a real gentleman." "Pigeons" is the only story with a mannered pattern. Its refrain,

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a dirge for Our Johnny—"He died for Ireland"—does not convince in the only valid way, that of terms of story. In all of the stories, even the one or two unsuccessful ones, there is a happiness of phrase and a quiet inevitability that make the careful structures of many another writer seem arch by contrast. The woodcuts by Sister Irena Uptegrove, O.S.B., strike an appropriate note; they arrest the liquid movement of the prose with a sure, soft touch. RILEY HUGHES.

Footnotes On Nature. John Kieran. With wood engravings by Nora S. Unwin. Doubleday. $3.00.

ALL WHO have made a practice of listening to the radio program, "Information Please," have long been aware that one of John Kieran's prime stocks of information—among incredibly numerous and various other stocks, ranging from Shakespeare to baseball to prizefighting to classical Latin—is in the category of natural history. It has been a continuing astonishment to listen to Mr. Kieran rattling off the Latin name of the rose-breasted grosbeak and to hear him summoning from the deeps of his fabulous memory the exact passage in Pliny (or Audubon or John Burroughs or a newspaper of seven weeks ago) that describes in thus-and-such a way the habits of thus-and-such an animal.

But a great many of us have undoubtedly been supposing that Mr. Kieran's nature-lore was only a kind of stunt, a feat of memory. We have not realized that he held it in any higher regard than his similarly prodigious information about, say, what prizefighter knocked out what other prizefighter in what round in 1911. We have too easily thought of Mr. Kieran just as a man who has the eccentric faculty of practically never forgetting anything.

If we have been thinking this, we have been gravely wrong. To let us know how wrong, here is John Kieran's "Footnotes On Nature." Abandoning the elaborate weaselings customary in reviews, let it be said clearly and immediately that John Kieran shows himself a real naturalist, in the best sense: a man with a deep, intelligent and lifelong devotion to the wonder of the natural world, and a man who knows how to write about his nature advertures with a winning enthusiasm.

It all began, it seems, back when John Kieran was a boy on a Dutchess County, New York, farm. He fell in love with the outdoors. He fell still more so while he was teaching rural school. (Who of us knew that? Or who of us knew, for that matter, that John Kieran holds a B.S. from Fordham?) All these many years, while Kieran has been earning a living writing sports articles, and then a larger living and a larger reputation as an exhibit of Total Recall on "Information Please," he has been slipping away at every possible moment to go slogging through swamps, scrabbling up mountains, and peering into fox-dens, in exercise of what has really been the central devotion of his life.

On his excursions he has frequently had the company of comrades he identifies only as The Dramatic Critic, The Artist, The Astronomer and The Magician. (Many readers will easily identify several of them more precisely). These "Footnotes" are the record of the adventures of this company a-foot . . . the company being now and then augmented by various entomologists and ornithologists whose names are given.

It is all told simply, warmly, with a contagious enthusiasm. Kieran manages to pack in so many shrewd and sharp observations of various wild creatures seen a-field that the book becomes a useful handbook for nature-hikers in the New York and New England areas. But that is not its primary purpose. Its primary purpose is just to tell of the happy and rewarding adventures of an exceptionally spontaneous-minded, glad-hearted man who has all his life loved to go poking around outdoors. A book could hardly succeed in doing so more genially.

John Kieran being John Kieran, his "Footnotes" are interspersed with more quotations than have perhaps ever been seen in any volume since the eighteenth century. An unofficial count of the quoted authors runs to twenty-seven, ranging from (of course) Shakespeare to Tennyson to Bryant to Cobbett to Chaucer to Masefield to the book of Ecclesiastes, and including along the way such rarities as Henry Fothergill Chorley. In the book of some other writer, it would look like a rather dreadful showing-off. But Kieran, disarmingly, is Kieran; and quotations bubble from him as naturally as do his cries of glee when he finds a fox-track in Van Cortlandt Park.

Nora Unwin's wood engravings are finely simple, never too mannered. They go admirably with this good, sound, simple book, and make it still more likable.

ALAN DEVOE.

Yankee Coast. Robert P. Tristram Coffin. Macmillan. $4.00.

WHERE DO THE people of Maine, especially those who live on the coast, get their striking vitality and individuality? For their character is so striking that even the overnight tourist cannot fail to some extent to mark it. The answer is not reassuring—either for a self-critical but limp city worker on a steaming summer day or for an observer who is painfully conscious how this country is going. The recipe is hard work. Or as Mr. Coffin much more picturesquely puts it: "Maine Yankees . . . have more work than they can shake a stick at. They run from job to job. Yet they have time to tell good stories and whittle out small boats for small boys. And what they do, they do for keeps, for good." Perhaps the symbol of their high degree of craftmanship is the substantial, historic Maine house.

Part of this often exciting study tells of the jobs themselves. Farming and fishing and hunting and odd jobs. It is one-horse, three-cow farming, often on ledges where machinery would not help much, but "at least you get to know the horse. . . . There is a lot to be gained by knowing a horse well, especially if you take him into your confidence and make him your friend." But "Yankee Coast" is not a book about farming, essential as it recognizes that element to be in the set-up along the jagged Maine coast.

Mr. Coffin does, however, make the calling of a Maine fisherman come alive; he manifests a remarkable combination of absolute knowledge, unqualified admiration and appropriate writing skill. The reader who goes out to sea with him in pursuit of a seven hundred pound horse mackerel, or tuna fish, as they call it in our manifold chain stores, is off on a memorable adventure. And when you make the calmer rounds of his traps with the local lobsterman you will marvel at the refinements in that fisherman's skill. At present prices both these hauls are particularly rewarding, but the point is that they, and

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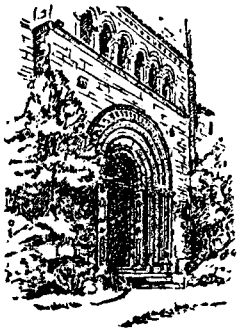

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all the preparations they require, are sandwiched in with plowing, milking, clamming, carpentering and island picnics.

These latter are only for hardier and more adventurous spirits whether the site of the feast, the roll of the Atlantic for a small fishing boat or the amount which each member of the party is expected to consume is considered. There are also in this book accounts of an all-night gorging on lobsters in the summer and on venison *in sub-zero moonlight which bespeak a heartiness* well beyond the normal state of human sensitiveness.

There are in Maine two curious groups of people: "mountain Jims" and "island Johns." The first are a pretty faithful replica of the southern hillbilly with his most pronounced virtues and vices. When these mountain folk make their occasional visits to town for provisions, there is danger of trouble. The latter are much more gentle souls, who have withdrawn from the world for one reason or another. Mr. Coffin is an enthusiast for the numerous Maine islands not only as a practically impregnable abode for hermits, but as places where even families may grow up under pioneer conditions and a primitive way of isolated living which brings out some of the hardier of the virtues. Living in a lighthouse has many of the same advantages, as the author sees it, with the extra glamor which his poetic tendencies adduce. To balance this "isolationism" he cites the world-mindedness which is inherent in a seafaring people.

There are so many good things to say about Maine that all Mr. Coffin can find to criticize is that the world outside is beginning to impinge upon it in the form of gas stations, chain stores and a general tendency to clear away forest wealth and hallowed homes in the natural course of peace and war. Down East Maine is not what it once was. Somehow or other summer visitors do not belong in this destructive category, for Tristram Coffin urges more and more Americans to come and see for themselves the community that still is Maine and the many tangible achievements of its native sons. He counts on the natural ruggedness of the terrain and the islands which are difficult of access—together with the farming fisherman or fisherman-farmer—to preserve his beloved commonwealth. Coastal Maine is indeed a subject for a man with a gift for narrative and poetic fire; Mr. Coffin has more than done it justice.

EDWARD S. SKILLIN.

Shirt Sleeve Diplomat. Josephus Daniels. North Carolina. $5.00.

THIS IS THE fifth volume in Mr. Daniels's leisurely autobiography. It is devoted, except for a few flashbacks and fewer postscripts, to his nine years as Ambassador to Mexico, 1933-42. Through this instalment Daniels, Sr., appears as a singularly charitable, honest, and likable old gentleman, a gather-all, mildly entertaining sort of writer, a rather uncritical observer who leaves many issues unanalyzed and undecided (at least in his printed record), and perhaps as good a fit in that particular post at that particular period as Roosevelt could have chosen.

The Good Neighbor policy confronted a situation in Mexico mixed enough to have frightened away a more hard-headed man. He had to deal with some politicos who found in the continuing "revolution" an excellent opportunity for power and pesos. Others, like Cardenas,

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were thorough-going, convinced socialists. Nearly all were, in varying degrees and more or less sincerely, hostile to United States influence and to the Church. He had to figure on the intense nationalistic spirit of the people and their enduring resentment against the "gringos," deriving from past exploitation or the need of a scape-goat for Mexico's internal troubles. He had to contend with the powerful oil interests and other United States citizens who held damage claims against the Mexican treasury. There were watchful and vocal Protestant groups in this country and in Mexico. He was lambasted by Catholics in the United States, who at one time called for his head because he had failed to end the persecution and seemed in their eyes to approve it. The Mexican hierarchy was friendly, but unwilling to make compromises which Daniels considered unimportant and they considered fundamental. Through all this he hewed to the Good Neighbor line, considerably improved relations between the two countries, maintained friendship with practically everyone from Calles to Archbishop Diaz, and even contrived to enjoy it all.

Only at times does he positively condemn anyone. The oil companies get a very vigorous denunciation, based on a set of facts which, for a change, he perceived to be unequivocal. He is also outspoken in a brief discussion of the Spanish civil war, wherein he reduces that complex struggle to a simple contest between the Republic and Franco's fascists, in the manner of a high school freshman or a popular columnist.

His liberalism is rather typically confused. With relish he quotes the definition, "A communist is any damn fellow you don't like." Consequently, his personal friendship for Toledano is not surprising but merely curious. He invited and welcomed Toledano to his home in North Carolina. I'm sure he would never think of having Earl Browder or Harry Bridges as a house-guest.

Mr. Daniels was far from being anti-Catholic. He assisted at Catholic services in Mexico City with good grace. This is not to say that he thoroughly understood the Catholic position. That would be asking too much of anyone but an unusually enlightened member of the Church—the sort of Catholic who, for other reasons, might have been quite useless as ambassador.

A passage as revealing of Daniels as any in the book is that giving his estimate of Monsignor John Burke, first Executive Secretary of the National Catholic Welfare Conference, with whom he conferred more than once over twenty years. "If I were to name," he writes, "two of the most saintly Christians, with love and charity for all, whom I have known in my long life, I would name my sainted Methodist mother and Catholic John Burke." No razor-edged mind, but a big heart, with its own wisdom and discernment.

JOHN M. HAYES.

Hawaii, the 49th State. Blake Clark. Doubleday. $3.00.

A BILL to admit Hawaii to statehood has recently passed the House. This book is obviously designed to capitalize on the interest that may be evoked by this legislation. It gives evidence that the opposition to the measure from commercial and industrial interests, the Big Five, has disappeared, and that all classes of the population now support statehood for the islands.

The volume is a rather superficial survey of Hawaii's history, resources and current condition. There are interesting chapters on the blundering military rule of the war period, and the successful organization of the plantation workers by the CIO. The fact that PAC, rather than the Big Five as in the past, controls the political fortunes of the islands, is in keeping with a worldwide trend, but is more surprising in Hawaii where paternalistic rule was well entrenched and favored by racial tension in the polygot population. Aside from these notes of contemporary interest, this book has little to recommend it.

J. N. MOODY.

The Inner Forum

The Church in South Africa

THE CURRENT issue of *Blackfriars,* distinguished monthly review published at Oxford by the English Dominicans, is devoted to South Africa. It was drawn up on the occasion of the British royal family's visit and of the establishment by the Dominicans of a formal house of studies in Stellenbosch, a university town thirty miles west of Cape Town. It is also brought out at a time when, according to the Editor, "Christian culture has reached a turning point when it may cease to be predominantly a European culture. Such continents as Africa have the advantage of taking all the tradition and heritage of the Catholic part of Italy, Spain, France and England. But with the approach of the atom bomb and the rapid disintegration of civilization in Europe it is time that in Africa this culture became Christian African culture, autonomous and developing in its own way beneath the dark brown skin of the native as well as the sun-baked skin of the Dutch or English settlers. . . . "

The Union of South Africa is the homeland of some thirteen million people, two million of them Europeans or their descendants. According to Oswin Magrath, O.P., segregation is strict there; yet he believes that the whites of South Africa have "a greater confidence in the possibilities of independent progress, and fundamentally greater respect for the African as a man" than the Europeans have in East Africa or other colonies where segregation is not so marked.

The Catholic population of South Africa totals more than three-quarters of a million people—about one-fifteenth of the whole. The proportion is higher among the natives than the whites, partly due to the strong hold which the Dutch Reformed churches have among the Afrikaans-speaking people. Most of the Catholic missioners are foreign, with Germans the largest single group. The bishops of that vast territory are planning a regional seminary in the Transvaal and the Oblates of Mary Immaculate have a training house at Pietermaritzburg. In Cape Town itself nearly half the clergy are South African born, but that is not usually the case.

The great hope of the Church at present as far as the darker races in South Africa are concerned is her growth in influence among the ten million Bantu, and in the important center of Basutoland the "Paramount Chief" is a Catholic. At Roma in Basutoland the South African bishops have started a university college for Africans. "There are seminaries at Roma, at Ixopo in Natal and at Chishawasha in Southern Rhodesia, all of which have only recently reached the stage of ordaining priests annually so that the number of African clergy is as yet

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small." Generally speaking the Church is less firmly established here than in the rest of Africa.

Father Magrath has the same view of things as that of the Editor: "The task arises of handing over as much of the Catholic tradition that Europe has built up as the Africans are able to receive. Catholic Europe does not yet realize that its cultural tradition is rapidly becoming a minority tradition in the Church; very soon a majority of priests, bishops and faithful will belong to other races and cultures. . . . "

In an article on "The Intellectual Apostolate in South Africa" Marthinus Versfeld stresses the fact that the original colonists were mostly Dutch and French Protestants and that therefore the influence of religion in education, the arts and philosophy there has been of a Calvinist sort. South Africa, too, is experiencing the effects of modern mechanization and urbanization with the result that older religious ties are becoming loosened. "The great need of higher education here is the rediscovery of Substance, the stopping of the corrosive fluency which is rinsing the heart out of man. This means the rediscovery of the Rock. . . . "

Father Nicholas Humphreys, O.P., describes some of the practical difficulties of a South African missioner. The bishops have decreed that two years' instruction and probation must precede baptism. When girls were received into the Church around the age of sixteen often they did not remain, particularly after marriage. So that now the general practice is to wait until a young woman is married before accepting her as a convert. Great difficulties were also experienced with people who were baptized on the point of dying, without long instruction or probation, and later recovered. Father Humphreys tried on several occasions to get boys' clubs started, as the children are in real need of organized recreation, but these groups usually broke up within six months due to jealousy, one of the principal weaknesses of these people.

It remains for Father Finbar Synnott, O.P., to explain why the current set-up of the native society in South Africa presents such an obstacle to Christianization. Some of these difficulties spring from the family-tribal tradition. But it is here that the exploiting colonial system must take a large share of the blame: "Most native men have to spend anything up to twenty years of their active life away from home working in the mines or towns." Or as Father Synnott puts it in another place: the "problem is migration, the undermining of the new faith by the destruction of social background, and incidentally the creation of a type of man, rootless, amoral, socially restless. . . . "

CONTRIBUTORS

Ernesto LUCIANI frequently contributes to THE COMMONWEAL on the scene dispatches on what is going on in South America.
Thomas MERTON is a Trappist monk of the Abbey of Gethsemani in Kentucky. Later in the year New Directions is to bring out another volume of his.
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